

# Pike Wild River

## [Program Property Page](#)

Other Plans: [1989 Master Plan](#) (not [NR44](#)-compliant); [Interim Forest Management Plan](#)

### Property Overview

The Pike Wild River, located in northern Marinette County, is one of only five state Wild Rivers in Wisconsin, designated by the State Legislature in 1965 to be protected from development and kept in a natural, free-flowing condition. The project boundary includes 61.3 miles of river corridor along the North, South, and Main branches of the Pike River. DNR ownership comprises 4,718 acres. The river flows through an area of extensive public lands, especially Marinette County Forest but also other state-owned lands and the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest.

The Pike Wild River is characterized by extensive forests and bedrock outcrops. A diversity of forest types occurs, including lowland forests of black ash and white cedar, northern hardwoods, and dry forests of oak and pine. There are also scattered peatlands, sedge meadows, and ephemeral ponds. Bedrock glades occur in various locations along the river, and rock bluffs provide scenic views in many places. The river features numerous rapids and waterfalls.

### Public Use and Recreation Facilities

The Pike Wild River offers a variety of recreational activities. Canoeing and kayaking are very popular, particularly during the spring, and the property also receives a fair amount of use for hunting, hiking, wildlife watching, and berry-picking. The upper reaches of the river are difficult to canoe but provide excellent trout fishing opportunities. Adult lake sturgeon, which migrate into the lower reaches of the Pike from the Menominee River, may be viewed (though not fished) downstream from Highway 141.

The Pike Wild River presents a scenic and natural recreational experience, though one that is remote and with few developed facilities. Access to the river is typically carry-in only, with roadside parking and a short hike to the water. Several minimally maintained, signed pull-offs and small parking areas are also available at various points along the river. Three developed parking lots, at the Highway 141 bridge, County Highway K bridge, and Pike River Road/Barker Road bridge, serve the most popular run of the river. Additional access to the river is available on Marinette County land.

### Natural Resources Management

Section 30.26, Wisconsin Statutes, states that designated Wild Rivers “shall receive special management to assure their preservation, protection and enhancement of their natural beauty, and their unique recreational and other inherent values”. NR 302.02(4), Wisconsin Administrative Code, states that Wild Rivers have an established protection zone comprising “the area of land within 400 feet of the waters or to the visual horizon from the water whichever is greater on either side of the wild river”. No development, including campgrounds, is allowed on DNR-managed lands adjacent to shorelines in the protection zone, nor beyond the protection zone up to at least a ¼-mile from either side of the wild river other than that which is necessary to accommodate the users of the wild river areas. Additionally, no vegetation control (save for erosion control or restoration activities) is allowed within 150 feet from the bank on either side of the wild river.

Accordingly, management on the state-owned land along the river is designed to show as few traces of human intervention as possible, and developments are kept back from the river’s edge except for limited carry-in boat



launches. Except for designated road crossings, motorized vehicle access is limited to designated areas outside the protection zone. Lands more than 150 feet from the rivers are managed for sustainable forest production, wildlife habitat, and public recreation. Timber harvests are completed with minimal visual impact, and selective cutting encourages long-term maintenance of or conversion to longer-lived species.

### **Special Attributes**

Three “Primary Sites” have been identified by the department for special consideration in this planning process. Primary sites generally encompass the best examples of 1) rare and representative natural communities and 2) documented rare species populations with opportunities for restoration or connections. Such sites warrant high protection and/or restoration consideration during the development of a property master plan. Primary Sites can be considered High Conservation Value Forests for Forest Certification. The Primary Sites on the Pike Wild River are:

- Pike Wild River Corridor (1,080 acres)
- Little South Branch Pike River (163 acres)
- Pike Wild River Conifer Hardwoods (158 acres)

There are no State Natural Areas within the Pike Wild River. A new State Natural Area designation may be made during this planning process.

A portion of the Pike Wild River, along the South Branch, is included in the Amberg [Conservation Opportunity Area](#) identified in the [Wisconsin Wildlife Action Plan](#).

The Pike River has been designated as an [Outstanding Resource Water \(ORW\)](#). These, along with Exceptional Resource Waters (ERW) are surface waters which provide outstanding recreational opportunities, support valuable fisheries and wildlife habitat, have good water quality, and are not significantly impacted by human activities. ORWs receive the state’s highest protection standards.

